

Research on Maine Blueberries, Potatoes and Forests Passes House

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WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Mike Michaud announced that funding he helped secure was included in the Agriculture Appropriations Act, which passed the House today. Michaud secured \$280,000 for the University of Maine Cooperative Extension for a potato integrated pest management program and \$173,000 for research on the sustainable production and processing of Maine lowbush blueberries. Michaud also worked with a coalition of Members of Congress from across the country to secure \$4,545,000 for wood utilization research, which is conducted at the University of Maine.

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“All three of these projects will directly help Maine based industries,” said Michaud. “Forest products, wild blueberries, and potatoes provide our state with thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in economic activity. This funding will support the success of these industries that are so crucial to our economy in Maine.”

In addition to funding these important local projects, the Agriculture Appropriations Act will also protect Americans’ food safety, boost rural economies, protect Americans against price fluctuations for necessities and help feed struggling families.

“Rural areas have been hit especially hard by this economic crisis,” said Michaud. “This bill will help reinvest in rural communities, encouraging business growth, supporting new infrastructure and bringing new jobs to Maine communities. USDA’s Rural Development program provides crucial funding to Maine communities and I am pleased that this bill continues to strongly support the program’s mission.”

More information on the Maine projects funded in the bill can be found below.

\$4,545,000 for University of Maine, Wood Utilization Research (WUR): This project would promote economic development and environmental protections in the Maine forest industry by generating new knowledge and technologies necessary to balance the sustainable use of our Nation's forest resources with the need to maintain a domestic forest products industry. This program funds 13 WUR Centers that generate the new knowledge and technologies necessary to balance the sustainable use of our Nation's forest resources with the need to maintain a domestic forest products industry.

The USDA Special Grant program for Wood Utilization Research is an extremely worthwhile project that supports wood products research and outreach through a dozen universities spread across the country from Alaska to Mississippi and Maine to Washington. This USDA Special Grant program has been authorized and funded by Congress since 1985.

WUR is the only federal program that supports regionally and nationally focused university research that provides creative and innovative science, technology, and advanced business practices that:

- Enhance domestic and global competitiveness of the U.S. wood products industry;

- Foster sustainable and environmentally acceptable wood product manufacturing and forest operations; and
- Lead to greater and more efficient use of renewable wood-based materials.

A major benefit of the USDA Special Grant has been the flexibility of the WUR Centers to rapidly address critical regional or national research needs. The WUR program has a remarkable track record for leveraging additional funds from States, industry, private groups.

The WUR Centers research is vital to maintaining the jobs and livelihoods of millions of people. WUR Centers emphasize strengthening the current workforce and developing a future workforce with advanced skills through their research and educational programs.

Over 2.1 million Americans are directly employed in the wood products manufacturing sector, with several million more jobs indirectly supported by the wood products sector. Many of these jobs are in rural areas where unemployment is high, especially among blue-collar workers.

\$173,000 for University of Maine, Maine Lowbush Blueberry Sustainable Production and Processing Research: This research will support sustainable crop management research and innovations in processing to remain globally competitive with other fruits. Funding is critical to Maine's Wild Blueberry growers and processors that a strong research program supports sustainable crop management research and innovations in processing to remain globally competitive with other fruits.

\$280,000 for University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Potato Integrated Pest Management: This funding will promote agricultural economic development by helping IPM scientists track potential pest outbreaks and help provide growers with current information on specific and timely treatments in order to minimize the number of pesticide applications and maximize potato yield. Potatoes are the top agricultural commodity in the State of Maine.

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